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STATINTL

The Bang-Jensen Case

In spite of many unanswered questions about some aspects in the case of the late Povel Bang-Jensen, the Senate Internal Security Committee—after an intensive inquiry—has turned up a hard lesson for our government, and the rest of us, for that matter.

Mr. Bang-Jensen was a Danish officer at the United Nations who was dismissed in 1958 in a dispute arising from his refusal to disclose the names of 81 Hungarians who had given him testimony after flight from their homeland following the ill-fated 1956 Hungarian revolution.

Quite apart from that incident, however, the Senate committee probed into the details of an attempt by Mr. Bang-Jensen to supply the U. S. government with information vital to the national security.

It seems he was approached by a Soviet official who wanted to defect and offered evidence that Soviet subversionists had penetrated both the UN Secretariat and U. S. intelligence agencies. The would-be defector indicated other Soviet nationals might join him, if they could be guaranteed asylum in this country.

Mr. Bang-Jensen wanted to relay this information to Allen Dulles, chief of our principal intelligence agency. But he had to make his approach thru State Department channels. There his offer got lost. He later committed suicide.

The only request to the State Department was that it ask Mr. Dulles to listen to Mr. Bang-Jensen's story. But nothing was done.

"From the standpoint of national security," the Senate committee comments, "the entire record in dealing with Bang-Jensen's request must be considered a lamentable example of procrastination and indecision."

As the committee suggests, we can't afford to dilly dally with any information which might tip us off to Soviet spying or infiltration either in government agencies or anywhere else in the country. The Soviets certainly are trying, and chances are they are succeeding, at least in part.

The Bang-Jensen story took place in 1956 and 1957. But State Department channels do not change much between administrations. We commend the Senate report to Secretary of State Rusk, to make as certain as possible a similar lack of action by the government, in the future.

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